

Betty + me



Betty Page & Me By Joseph Fernandez
by David Aaron Clark

BETTY PAGE
& ME BY
JOSEPH
FERNANDEZ

as told
to david aaron
clark.

MAYBE IT BEGAN
with the Betty
Page for President
campaign in '96.
It was just sup-
posed to be an
in-joke, cultish
little exercise
in pre-feminist
hipness, really:
the woman in ques-
tion had been

missing and presumed dead since the Fla.
trailer park explosion that immolated a
few acres worth of retirees along with
their collected deitrus, their
compact little microwave ovens and their
kitchen-sized color tvs; their beagles
and parrots; their purple hearts and
their faded wedding dresses so carefully
preserved in cardboard boxes printed
with the logos of department store
chains long since gone belly-up/

It had only been a month or two
earlier that she had been discovered by
the press and finally convinced to take
her rightful place as an icon of sexual
nostalgia. Scheduled to appear in Playboy,
it ended up in Penthouse after the Gooch
saw to it that a couple associates had a
lengthy heart-to-heart with the freelanc-
ers' in question's close relatives. L.A.
& N.Y. newsdealers still shake their
heads over the day that issue hit the



stands. Beat Madonna & Vanessa hands down.

That led to the People thing, the Letterman jokes, the USA Today spread, the HBO documentary. Thru it all, though, there was not one recent photo of Betty printed; the delicate balance of her mystique was maintained.

That was the summer of the Southern Belle. Times Square billboards, unlicensed Korean-made tee-shirts that shrank two sizes in the wash, gimme caps. Keychains. Unauthorized bios; three of them, all photo-heavy. Bunny Yeager and Paula Klaw made fortunes. Betty Page became as safe as ice cream -- her elevation to pop icon laundered her good-at-being-bad-girl image and she was rechristened Betty Page, dark madonna of the millenium. No longer an underground obsession, now her very ubiquitousness made her a culture threat. When Betty Page belongs to everybody, everybody belongs to Betty Page. And nobody knew to what extent that was going to come true.



THERE'VE BEEN JOKE WRITE-IN CAMPAIGNS during Presidential elections

before, but none that captured the public imagination in quite the way this one did. But if forced to choose between Jesse Jackson, Dan Quayle or Betty Page for stewardship of the American Dream, who would any red-blooded patriot raised on Mother's Milk and Necco wafers choose? It was a gesture of disgust, hope & rebellion that meant something private and different to each citizen who wrote in their vote. Everyone, including feminists travelling pathways of logic convoluted even for them, found something to identify with in Betty Page.

The New York Times sneered that it was a national embarrassment, a "testimonial to the trivializing taint of modern pop culture," that Betty Page, freshly immolated though she probably was, was morally if not technically President when Dan Quayle was assassinated, along with vice-President-elect Helms, hours before their inauguration.



THE EMERGENCY election took a month to organize. Imagine the media and the political establishment's chagrin when Betty Page won again, this time by a decisive & resounding margin. Imagine the panic

when it was discovered that Betty Page was not dead.

OR, TO BE MORE PRECISE, a Betty Page still existed, thanks to a secretly-perfected cloning technique combined with forced artificial growth methods concurrently developed. One of the scientists enlisted in the early 1950s to work on the project, sponsored by a corporate cartel, had acquired, through purchase of a pair of Betty's black stockings following a Saturday afternoon photo-club excursion, enough skin debris to cryogenically preserve in a red plastic beer cooler. It eventually provided him with her DNA code; it was all he needed as he secretly replicated every breakthrough the project enjoyed, creating through trial and error a per-





fect clone of the grandest girlie-book model to ever curl up on a couch.

He raised her in absolute privacy/ He was an odd man; though he had harbored a monumental sexual desire for her blueprint, once he had created his own version he found the father-daughter dynamics of the situation prevented him from closing the loop of his obsession. He complemented her growth with the most extraordinarily avant-garde teaching techniques available to a prominent member of the world scientific community: she was raised on a ranch in Texas, replacing her predecessor's Alabama drawl with the Southwestern twang of the ranch hands.

Her psychological growth was steered in as similar a fashion as the



detailed research on the first Betty's upbringing would allow. So it was that her nature was certainly nothing more or less than the original's, and her "father" meant to see that the results of her nurturing would be similar.

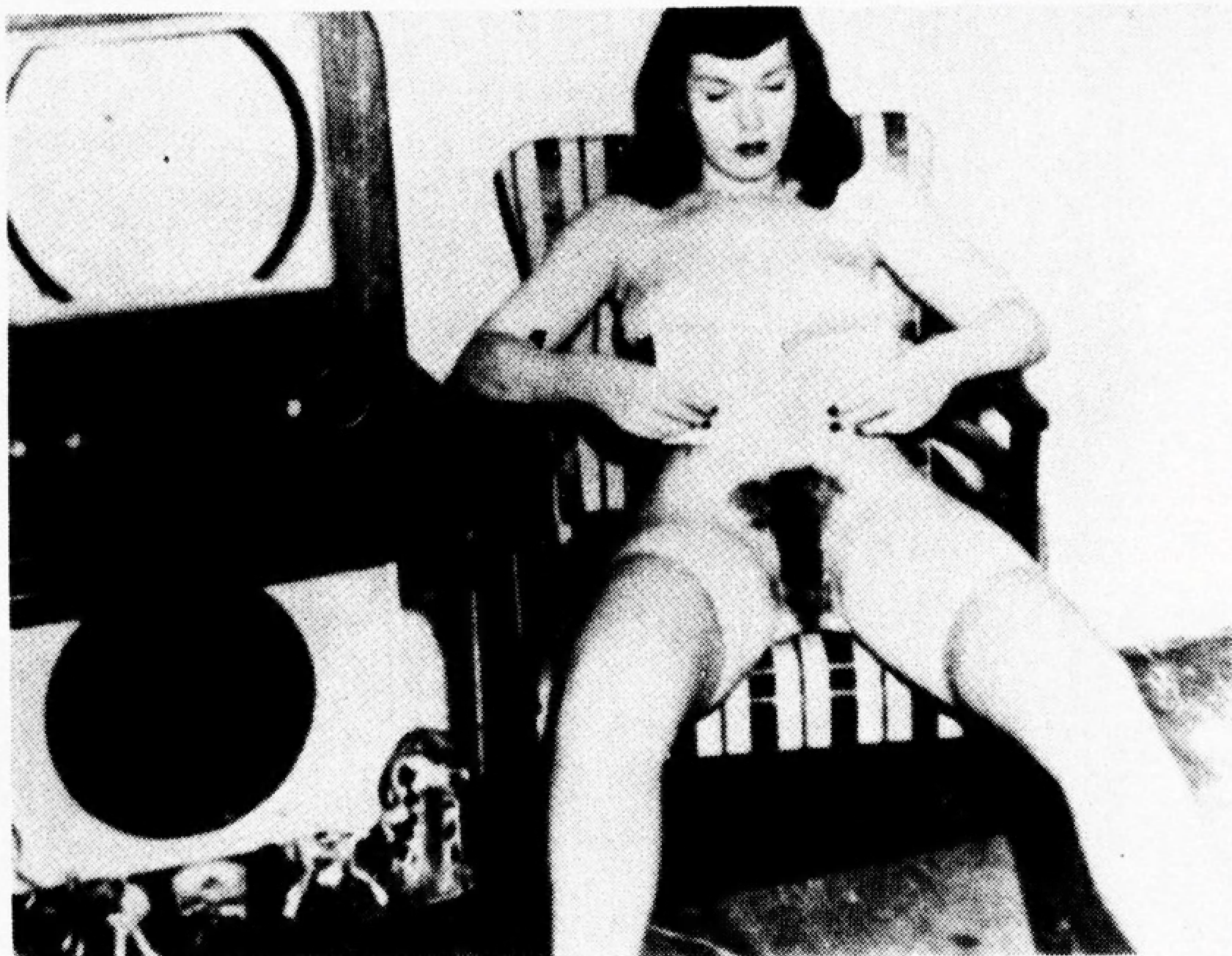
She grew up an athlete and a thinker; a quite capable horsewoman and an inveterate politician, able to easily manipulate those

around her to her own, usually benevolent ends. She enjoyed wrapping men around her finger, but was so open and self-effacing about it that she enjoyed the friendly envy of the women around her rather than their enmity. She knew to behave at certain times with the exact amount of helplessness and confusion to draw forth sisterly instinct.

She was a constant and warming flame to the tightly knit, conspiratorial group gathered around her. When the first Betty was immolated, her passing was mourned in a living room turned temporary chapel, with her artificial progeny plunked down in the first row of folding chairs, dressed in a snug black dress with silk stockings and holding a bouquet of white roses as if it were a child, occasionally using the softness of the virgin petals to wipe away a confused tear.

When she was inadvertantly elected President, there ensued utter chaos on the ranch, as scientists, cooks, cowboys and tutors all debated her best course of action. The Mexican housekeepers considered it a sign from God; they secretly believed that Betty, having been born free from Original Sin through the miracle of science, was in fact the second coming. The scientist was a proud papa but harbored justifiable fears over political assassination. Technically she fit the bill; she had just turned 35, and she was, down to the fingerprints, Betty Page. All the while fearing his action would plunge the country into chaos, he revealed his deed and his daughter.

He had underestimated the public thirst for beauty and for icons. The Senate hearings, the public debates, the Supreme Court decision ate up nearly a year of Betty's term, all the while providing new, unimagined windfalls for those bent on



marketing her image. But in the end, you would have thought somebody put something in the water; Betty was President. Nancy Reagan, now a widow, opined in an interview that if she had known America was ready to elect a woman, she would have run and saved them the embarrassment of electing the genetic effluvia of a little slut like that. Soon after Reagan could not appear in public without being pelted with rotten eggs.

IT WAS 1999 when Betty and I met face to face; she needed a Secretary of Education, and my experience in Miami & NYC made me a natural. And, if I may abandon false modesty, I was ready: years spent dealing with the worst teachers & principals in the nation, as well as some of the most driven and talented, had given me solid ideas on how to resuscitate the wheezing beast of Public Ed. The second baby boom had been a fizzle, & there were frightening rumors of tax revolution in the air.

But such mattered little to me that night in the Oval Office when Betty took me into her arms and stole away my breath with a studied yet passionate kiss. Her lips were a drug, her shoulders the alabaster sculpture of some lost pagan goddess. I buried my nose in her fragrant brunette bangs to better kiss her pale forehead and whisper to her of how I had dreamed of her before she was even born. I was old enough to be her grandfather; a widower. Perhaps I reminded her of the Mexican boys on the ranch. I couldn't fathom, so I just gloried in being the President's paramour.

At night we would send the secret servicemen away and she would recreate the other Betty's most famous poses, a faux leopard bikini completing the illusion, hugging her perfectly-tapered, strong milky thighs,

snuggling the slightest bit under the discreet swell of her firm, womanly belly. I would bury my face between the cheeks of that magnificent, two-of-a-kind ass, huffing and gulping until she was squirming with laughter, giggling over my perversions.

AS FOR THE WORLD AROUND US, it got worse in some way and better in others, as it always has. Shortly after Betty's 2nd term began, our affair went public. Dire consequences were predicted from several major pulpits, secular and otherwise - inhabitants of the latter claimed the millenium had arrived and all that was left was for us to have the # of the Beast stamped across our foreheads. Arizona & Utah boasted cults that considered Betty a figure of supernatural proportions; the media called them Cargo Cults.

Meanwhile I fell into a personal crisis dictated by the vagaries of my libido; I



became obsessed with navels. Betty, who had been grown artificially, didn't have one. A small thing though, really: she was otherwise, after all, the perfect woman.

But still, before I knew it, I was visiting prostitutes, ignoring their breasts & vaginas in favor of their navels. Shallow, firm-bellied navels. Deep, cavernous navels. As long as the slightest wisp of mystery & promise fell across a stomach, I could be

red. I kept a shoebox collection of pol-
- of women's navels. It went with me every-
where - once I masturbated in the Air Force One
restroom to a smeary print of a pudgy Norweigen's
stomach-cavern. My face, hot with shame, was
greeted by Betty's smile as she looked up at me
when I returned to our seats. There were half a
dozen important bills spread across her heavenly
lap.

It came out eventually, first in the super-
market weeklies. Several sympathetic secret
servicemen offered to have the editors silenced,
but I didn't have the belly for it...Instead I
suffered the most exquisite fall from grace since
the days of Caesar & Cleopatra. Many political
enemies used my personal gotterdamerung to in-
validate my educational programs. Betty, a brave
woman to the last, suggested we seek counseling.
But I knew that if I spent a moment longer in
the hot white light of public scrutiny, I would
evaporate like tears on a beach. I left in the
middle of the night in an army helicopter, with
only the clothes on my back, \$100,000 in cash,
and this shoebox.



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WHO'S DAT?

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